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2. Title

The story title, *The Luncheon* highlights the importance of that particular event for the writer. It was a very stressful occasion for him, and ended with him having no money to live on for the rest of the month. By remembering this luncheon the writer remembers how young and immature he was at that time. He remembers how flattered he was that the woman showed so much interest in him; and how he agreed to everything she requested – her choice of restaurant, her choice of food – as he was too immature to oppose her.

A luncheon is defined as a formal meal, but it is usually a small one. The woman's huge meal contrasts with the tiny meal the writer had.

3. Themes

The main themes of story of *The Luncheon* are the **conflict between truth and lies** and the **contrast between appearance and reality**. At the restaurant the woman repeatedly says that she only eats one thing for lunch, but she contradicts herself by ordering more food. At their meeting 20 years later the

woman tells the writer: "You asked me to luncheon". The reality is that she had suggested that the writer "give her a little luncheon at Foyot's".

Twenty years ago the writer may have pretended to be more successful than he really was; but he was too proud to let the woman know that he could not afford the meal, so he kept up appearances. He even lied about never drinking champagne, so that he could save some money.

vocab

Keeping up appearances:

Pretending to be something you are not; giving an appearance or illusion.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The main story takes place at Foyot's, a very expensive restaurant in Paris where French senators dined, and where the writer knew that he would struggle to pay for the meal.

4.2 Structure and plot development

The writer uses the present tense to begin the story, but then takes us back in time to the memory of the earlier meeting with the woman. This literary device is known as a **flashback**. The main action or plot of the story takes place in the flashback to a past event – the luncheon. The story is structured so that only the beginning and end of the story are told in the present tense.

At that time, 20 years before, the young writer knew the restaurant was too expensive for him, which was confirmed when he saw the prices on the menu. The woman, however, kept ordering expensive things to eat, creating the **rising tension** in the story as the young man became more stressed. The **complication** is that the young writer was too afraid to stop the woman ordering more food, even though he knew he could not afford it.

The **conflict** in the story is created by the tension between the writer's panic and embarrassment and the woman's greedy desire to enjoy her meal at his expense.

The writer experienced a great deal of anxiety and panic about how he would pay the huge bill at the end of the meal. As the meal proceeded he began to imagine how he would react if the bill was too large for him to pay. First he thought of claiming that someone had picked his pocket, then he thought that he would leave his watch at the restaurant and pay later to get it back. The **climax** of the story occurs when the bill finally arrives. He found that he could manage to pay it, but would have no more money left for the rest of the month.

Now, 20 years later, the story finally reaches a **resolution** as it ends with an ironic '**twist in the tale**'. The narrator tells us that he had "revenge at last" because the woman was now very overweight.

hint A **flashback** allows the writer to show events that happened before the time of the present narration.

A "**twist in the tale**" is also known as an **ironic twist** or a **plot twist**. It is an **unexpected change in the outcome or ending of a story**.



4.3 Characterisation

There are three characters in the story – the **young writer**, the **woman** he takes to lunch and **the waiter** at the restaurant. The writer is the **protagonist**, the main character. The woman is the **antagonist**, as she stands in opposition to him and creates the tension in the story. The young writer is very scared of the forty-year-old woman so he allows himself to be manipulated into buying her an expensive meal. He is too proud to tell her that he cannot afford the restaurant, being a young, inexperienced and upcoming writer. His youth and inexperience **contrast** with the woman's ruthless, selfish behaviour. He admits that he is flattered that she had admired his writing:

"she seemed inclined to talk about me"

vocab

Flattery: Excessive and insincere praise.

The writer says he was "prepared to be an attentive listener". This shows how he is easily seduced by **flattery**.

In the story we only see the woman from the writer's point of view. He describes the woman in unpleasant terms:

"She was not so young as I expected and in appearance imposing rather than attractive."

She seemed to have a big mouth and more teeth than she needed and he is repulsed by the sight of her eating the asparagus:

"I watched the abandoned woman thrust them down her throat in large voluptuous mouthfuls"

Apart from the fact that the woman is not truthful, she is also bossy, as she constantly tells him that he is wrong to eat what she refers to as a "heavy luncheon" and to fill his stomach with "a lot of meat". She has no sensitivity, as she does not see that one chop is not a "heavy luncheon", in **contrast** to what she has eaten.

The woman has no understanding of or insight into the writer's dilemma. When he leaves only a small tip for the waiter (which is the only money he has left), she thinks he is mean. At the end of the luncheon she does not understand that the writer is telling the truth when he says he will "eat nothing for dinner". It appears to her that he is joking and she, therefore, calls him a "humorist". At the end of the story we see that the woman has never admitted the truth to herself about her eating habits, because after 20 years of excessive eating she is now **obese**.

vocab

Obese: Extremely fat.

At the end of the story we see how, 20 years later, the writer has changed and feels differently about the woman's behaviour. He is not, as he admits a "vindictive" man, as he did not do anything to her, or say anything to show how unfairly she had treated him. However, he is comforted that circumstances ("the immortal gods") made her pay for her greedy self-indulgence. Now he can look at her without fear or anger, but with "complacency" (self-satisfaction), because clearly years of eating so much have resulted in her being very overweight.

The only other character mentioned in the story is **the waiter**. The writer feels that he is "ingratiating" and "false", which makes him seem as if he only wants to please the woman. The waiter has a "priest-like face", which gives the appearance that he is very serious, and perhaps also

summary

The Luncheon

by W. Somerset Maugham

1. Title

- By calling it *The Luncheon* the author highlights the importance to him of that lunch date.

2. Themes

- Conflict between **truth** and **lies**
- Contrast between **appearance** and **reality**

3. How is the story told?**3.1 Setting**

- Mainly in Foyot's the expensive restaurant in Paris

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **Flashback:** From the present to a past event
- **Rising tension:** The woman ordering expensive things to eat
- **Complication:** The young writer is too afraid to stop the woman ordering more food
- **Conflict:** Tension between the writer's panic and embarrassment and the woman's greed
- **Climax:** The arrival of the bill
- **Resolution:** The ironic 'twist in the tale' when the writer sees the obese woman 20 years later

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonist:** The writer is the main character.
- **Antagonist:** The woman stands in opposition to him.
- **The waiter:** Serious and "false"

3.4 Style

- **Repetition:** The woman's words, "I never eat more than one thing".
- **Contradiction:** Her words (above) contradict her actions.
- **Tension:** This contradiction builds the tension in the story.

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- **First person**

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- "I'll eat nothing for dinner tonight."
Irony
- "The smell of the melted butter tickled my nostrils as the nostrils of Jehovah were tickled by the burned offerings of the virtuous Semites."
Simile
- "They had the blush of an innocent girl; they had the rich tone of an Italian landscape."
Metaphor
- "How time does fly"; The prices were "beyond my means".
Clichés

Answers to Activity 6

1. (a) The locust has lost its leg. ✓
 (b) The woman / his wife. ✓
 (c) No. He is merely making a joke. He knows very well that it is not possible. ✓✓
 OR
 Yes. He is using the locust to point out/emphasise his own disability/difficulty in moving around. ✓✓ (2)
2. Locusts are pests (that destroy crops). The farmers would be happy that the locust was kept busy elsewhere. ✓✓ (2)
3. A /the man and the locust. ✓ (1)
4. (a) His mood changes from happiness to irritation. ✓
 He was joking at first but he later became nasty/angry. ✓
 He was happy but once the locust flew off he became unhappy. ✓ (2)
 (b) He realises that the locust is able to fly. ✓
 The locust is able to move but he cannot. ✓
 Although the locust has lost a leg just like he has, the locust can fly away but he is still stuck in the wheelchair. ✓ (2)
5. False. The serpent refers to the locust. ✓
 It refers to the temptation in the Garden of Eden. ✓
 It refers to the temptation that there is hope in end. ✓
 (False hope for the man). ✓
 Everything can be fixed in the end. ✓ (2)
6. At first she is afraid of the locust and then she feels sorry for the locust. ✓
 She feels sorry for the locust and then becomes afraid of the locust. ✓ (2)
7. Yes. She takes good care of her husband. /She is patient tolerant. ✓✓
 OR
 No. ✓ It is her duty to take care of him even if he is disabled. ✓✓ (2)
8. They should be helped. ✓
 They should be helped to become independent. ✓
 They should be counselled. ✓
 They should not be treated like outcasts. ✓ (2)

[17]



Any TWO of these answers to questions 4a), b), and 8 will earn you 2 marks.



Questions 7 and 8 ask for your opinion. Back up your view with reasons. These answers are examples.

words to know

Definitions of words from the short story:

fervently	eagerly
furled sail	sail that is folded up
arrested	stopped, put on hold
compellingly	forcefully, powerfully
unobtrusive	not noticed, not obvious
annealment	strengthening, healing
lugubrious	sad
hypnotic	making somebody feel controlled, unable to get away or look away
dread	fear
armour	metal clothing worn in battle
kinship	connection, similarity
pulsations of a heart	beating of a heart
effaced	withdrawn
aperture	hole, opening
reproachfully	disapprovingly
loathed	hated
compassion	sympathy, pity
solemn	serious
inquisitive	curious
unnerved	afraid

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But then my journey took an unexpected turn.

Quite suddenly, and without much warning, the three friendly men leave the train. The writer is left in the compartment with the two unfriendly brothers.

The **rising tension** in the story begins when the writer looks at the brothers more closely and realises that they are wearing the khaki uniforms worn by juvenile delinquents. He also realises they do not have a guard with them. Suddenly their behaviour changes and they begin to act aggressively – they start talking loudly, swearing, spreading their luggage all over the compartment and littering.

Then they start discussing their brother, who was killed by a gang in Coronationville, Johannesburg. They are on their way to attend his funeral and swear to take revenge on his killer. The brutal and violent way they plan to take revenge scares the writer terribly.

The **conflict** in the story grows:

- The writer is now scared to be alone with the brothers.
- They start looking at him straight in the eye, scaring him even more.
- He thinks about asking for a transfer to another compartment, but is too afraid to leave his luggage behind.

The **tension** within the writer is now so great he cannot even eat.

The story reaches an amazing **climax** when one of the brothers recognises him as “that clever boy who used to read books and write stuff”. Their grandmothers were sisters, so in fact the writer and the two brothers are relatives. From then on he begins to relax and enjoy the journey.

The **resolution** to the main story and the story told by the brothers comes three years later, when the narrator reads in the newspaper about “rampant gang crime in the streets of Western Township and adjacent Coronationville”. The two brothers who had “never reached twenty-one” had been stabbed to death in the violence, and were now “in the same graveyard as their brother, killed three years ago”.

4.3 Characterisation

The narrator is the writer. He is the **protagonist**, as he is the main character. The two brothers, his relatives, are the **antagonists** in the story.

The brothers contrast with the writer in every way. For example, while the writer tells a funny story about a man who pretended to be a murderer, the brothers are plotting a murder in real life.

In a train compartment (which is the main setting for the story) the different passengers also form a contrast to one another.

The three young men who are carpenters or builders are very friendly to the young writer. It is to them the writer tells the story about Georgie.

4.4 Style

The story makes use of the stylistic device of “**a story within a story**”. The bigger story is of the young writer visiting his relatives in Carnarvon to write a family saga. This is the outer frame of the story. His experiences with the people in his compartment on the train back to Johannesburg form the



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8. Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Write "true" or "false" and give a reason for your answer.
Before they tell him, the narrator is certain that the two boys are brothers. (2)
9. The narrator in this story researches his family history. Do you think it is a good idea for one to do this? Discuss your view. (2)
- [18]

Answers to Activity 7

1. a) history/roots/background/saga ✓
b) Cape Town ✓ (2)
2. Cigarettes smoked immediately after one another/in close succession. ✓ (1)
3. a) Metaphor ✓ (1)
b) Historical facts are hard to find, just like water is hard to find in a dry riverbed. ✓
OR
History is as boring as a dry riverbed is dry and lifeless. ✓
OR
He wanted to convey/emphasise/show that historical facts are hard to find/boring ✓ (2)
4. They smile at him. ✓
They ask him about his visit/journey to Cape Town. ✓
They listen to his conversation with real interest. ✓
One of them offers him a beer. ✓
They laugh at his story (about Georgie Abraham's). ✓
When they leave, they shake his hand/say hi back. ✓ (2)
5. He is scared of them. ✓
They are not to be trusted. ✓
He is worried that they might harm him. ✓
He is afraid that they might steal his luggage. ✓
He feels indifferent. ✓ (2)
6. They are no longer outnumbered. ✓
They realise the narrator is scared. ✓
The narrator is, more or less, the same age as the boys. ✓
They are bullies, exploiting the fact that he is young and scared. ✓ (2)
7. He is afraid that they will steal his luggage while he is out. ✓
He is afraid that they will know why he is going to the conductor. ✓ (2)
8. True. They look exactly alike/identical./They have identical lips and eyes/features. ✓✓ (2)
9. Yes. It is good to know one's background/heritage. You might come across family members you never knew. ✓✓ (2)
OR
No. You may discover some disturbing facts. It is better to leave the past alone and start afresh. ✓✓ (2)

[18]



Many of these questions only ask for TWO reasons for 2 marks. These are examples of correct answers.



Always support your opinions with reasons. The answers to question 9 are examples.

"I pray you never in your life to think about this day."

Both Pinkie and China have difficulty letting each other know how they feel about each other. This is mainly because of the cruelty and hardships of the apartheid city in which they live. It makes gentle emotions like love seem dangerous and they both "panicked at the thought of a love affair".

From the start, Pinkie is a bit afraid of China – he attracts and repels (drives her away) her at the same time:

She felt "a repelling admiration".

She felt he was the kind of man who could be attractive as long as he remained more than a touch away from the contemplator;

China also carried on "a dumb show", by not telling Pinkie that he loved her:

Pinkie and China panicked at the thought of a love affair and remained **dumb**.

The seriousness of China and Pinkie's relationship is contrasted with Naidoo's ability to chat easily and joke with Pinkie. His anecdotes "sent Pinkie off into peals of laughter". Naidoo's relationship is a source of jealousy for China. He suspects that Naidoo likes Pinkie and thinks that Pinkie is in love with Naidoo.

Naidoo also gives some comic relief to the story, as he mispronounces words for comic effect.

vocab

Dumb: Speechless; unable to speak.

4.4 Style

The relationship between Pinkie and China is explored through the use of **dialogue** and **descriptions**.

Dialogue works to give us an immediate idea of the characters' thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Another technique that the writer makes use of is contrasts. For example, the love of China and Pinkie contrasts with the harshness of their world.

In addition, the writer also contrasts aspects of their personalities. For example, at first China seems frightening to Pinkie:

There was something sly in those soft, moist, slit eyes, but the modest stoop at the shoulders gave him a benign appearance; otherwise he would have looked twisted and rather fiendish. There was something she felt in his presence: a repelling admiration.

The violence of China as opposed to the sweetness of Pinkie is shown right at the beginning of the story when, even though he helps Pinkie, China is seen as one of the violent strikers:

Almost rudely he pushed her into the street, took the cart by the stump of a shaft and wheeled it across the street,

When China first looks carefully at Pinkie he notices her fragility:

His eyes travelled from her small tender fingers as she washed a few things, to her man's jersey which was a faded green and too



Activity 10

Read the extract below and answer the questions that follow.

Extract B

[China attacks Pinkie in her coffee-cart.]

At that very moment she realised fully the ghastliness of a man's jealousy, which gleamed and glanced on the blade and seemed to have raised a film which steadied the slit eyes. Against the back wall she managed to speak.

"All right, China, maybe you've done this many times before. Go ahead and kill me; I won't cry for help, do what you like with me." 5

She panted like a timid little mouse cornered by a cat. He couldn't finish the job he had set out to do. Why? He had sent two men packing with a knife before. They had tried to fight, but this creature wasn't resisting at all. Why, why, why? He felt the heat 10 pounding in his temples; the knife dropped, and he sank on to a stool and rested his head on the wall, his hands trembling.

After a moment he stood up, looking away from Pinkie. "I'm sorry, Pinkie, I pray you never in your life to think about this day."

She looked at him, mystified. 15

"Say you forgive me." She nodded twice.

Then she packed up for the day, much earlier than usual.

The following day China did not visit Pinkie; nor the next. He could not decide to go there. Things were all in a parked wire tangle in his mind. But see her he must, he thought. He would just 20 go and hug her; say nothing but just press her to himself because he felt too near even to tell her not to be afraid of him any more.

1. Complete the following sentences by using the words in the list below.

jersey; guilty; ring; happy; compassionate; jealous; aggressive

- China sees Pinkie wearing a (a) He is (b) ... because Naidoo gave it to her. China becomes (c) ... towards Pinkie. Later, he feels (d) ... about this behaviour. (4)
- How does Naidoo make a living? (1)
- Is the following statement TRUE or FALSE? Write "true" or "false" and give a reason for your answer.
Pinkie accepted the gift from Naidoo as a token of his love. (2)
- Refer to line 6 of extract B ("She panted like ... by a cat"). Why does the writer compare Pinkie to a mouse and China to a cat? (2)
- Refer to lines 7–8 of extract B ("He had sent ... a knife before"). What does this line show you about China's past behaviour? (1)

The train passengers do not at first take action when they are faced with gangsterism and violence. Nobody stops the *tsotsi* from harassing the girl, or prevents the *tsotsi* from stabbing the big man, or stops the man from flinging the *tsotsi* out of the window. The large man who takes action against the *tsotsi* also behaves in a violent way, which is not a solution to the social problem of crime.

Perhaps the writer is saying that violence has become so common that people no longer see it as a problem:

too many passengers had seen too many tragedies to be rattled by this incident.

People have become so used to violence that they are not shocked by such incidents. They consider them as a break in their dull lives. Although the narrator is also guilty of not getting involved, the writer uses him to convey the message that the people are too used to crime and too passive to fight against it.

4. How is the story told?

4.1 Setting

The story takes place at the Dube station and on the Dube train. It is on the train trip from Dube to Johannesburg that the events involving the girl, the *tsotsi* and the huge man take place.

The narrator links the train trip with life in general:

the protocol of congested trains filled with sour-smelling humanity, did not improve my impression of a hostile life directing its malevolence purely at me.

Remember that this story was written during apartheid. Black people were only allowed to travel third class in trains.



4.2 Structure and plot development

At the beginning of the story the narrator gives a description of the environment at the station and the people who, like him, feel depressed on that Monday morning. The faceless, nameless people add to his feeling of despair.

When the narrator gets on to the train he describes the passengers more individually. The writer describes the huge man who sits opposite him, a young girl who gets on the train later and a *tsotsi* who sees the girl and comes to harass her.

The *tsotsi*'s harassment of the girl is the **complication** in the story. It creates the **rising tension**, to the point where the huge man gets up to intervene, after the *tsotsi* insults a woman who yells at the men nearby to stop the *tsotsi*. When the *tsotsi* draws a knife it creates panic in the carriage:

the woman shrieked and men scampered on to seats.

The **climax** of the story occurs when the *tsotsi* stabs the big man who confronts him. The man then picks the *tsotsi* up and flings him out of the train window.

4.4 Style

The strength of the story lies in the writer's use of **contrasts**.

For example, Walter Mitty is a timid, inadequate, forgetful, absent-minded man who is constantly being picked on by his wife. By contrast, his wife has an attitude of certainty and control. Whereas he listens to her without comment, Mrs Mitty constantly comments on his behaviour, as she thinks he does everything wrong and she knows better.

She often treats him as if he were a child. For example:

"I'm going to take your temperature when I get you home."

She gives the impression that it is she who will get him home, but in reality it is he who will drive. As a result of being controlled in this way, Mitty feels humiliated and seeks to find an escape from her demands. It is not surprising that his fantasy world forms a pleasurable contrast to his real world. Here, at least, he is the brilliant, brave and dependable hero who saves the day and whom everyone admires.

4.5 Narrator and point of view

The **narrator** is not one of the characters in the story. The narrative is told using the **third person**.

4.6 Diction and figurative language

The way the writer uses figurative language and literary devices is very effective in the story.

The story can be read as a **satire** revealed to us by the fantasies that Walter Mitty has about himself. The satire works through the **irony** used throughout the story because, in his fantasy life, Mitty is completely different from what he is in reality. In his fantasies he is always respected and admired for his bravery and ability to save others in dangerous situations. In his real life he is the opposite of this.

Onomatopoeia (words that imitate real-life sounds) is always used in the fantasies. Sounds like "pocketa-pocketa" are used to show the reader that Mitty is in his "secret life". It indicates the sound of the hydroplane and the anaesthetiser. The "rat-tat-tatting" indicates the sound of guns and flame throwers used by bomber pilots.

Note also the use of grammatical punctuation marks, namely the **ellipsis**, to indicate when Mitty is entering or coming out of one of his fantasies.

In order to add humour to the story the writer makes use of a number of **malapropisms** (words that sound like the correct one but are wrong) and **neologisms** (made-up words). For example, in Mitty's hospital fantasy the malapropisms "Obstreosis of the ductal tract" and "streptothricosis" sound like medical conditions, but they are not the correct terms. The gun in the courtroom fantasy is called by the **neologism** "Webley-Vickers 50.80", but there is no gun with that name in reality.

vocab

Satire: The use of irony to comment critically on society or an individual.
Irony implies the opposite of what is either said or written.

vocab

Ellipsis: Three dots... which show that a sentence or thought is incomplete.

summary

- **Second story layer:** Walter Mitty's boring life and nagging wife
- **Crisis points/climaxes:** Occur in each of his five fantasies, although not all reach a resolution
- **Complications:** Occur in Walter Mitty's real life because he is forgetful and inadequate
- **Anti-climax:** The end of the story, as Walter Mitty is left standing in the rain waiting for his wife

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonist:** Walter Mitty, the main character
- **Antagonist:** Mrs Mitty, who opposes him in most things. She is presented as a caricature and a stereotype.
- **Characters in Walter Mitty's fantasies:** All treat him as a hero
- **Characters in Walter Mitty's real life:** All make him feel small and pathetic

3.4 Style

- **Contrasts:** Between the characters of Walter Mitty and his wife; between Walter Mitty's fantasy life and real life

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- Third person

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- **Satire:** The **irony** in the complete contrast between Walter Mitty's character in his fantasy life and his character in real life
- "pocketa-pocketa", "rat-tat-tatting"
- **Onomatopoeia**
- "Obstructions of the ductal tract" "streptothricosis"
- **Malapropisms**
- "Webley-Vickers 50020"
- **Neologism**

3.7 Tone and mood

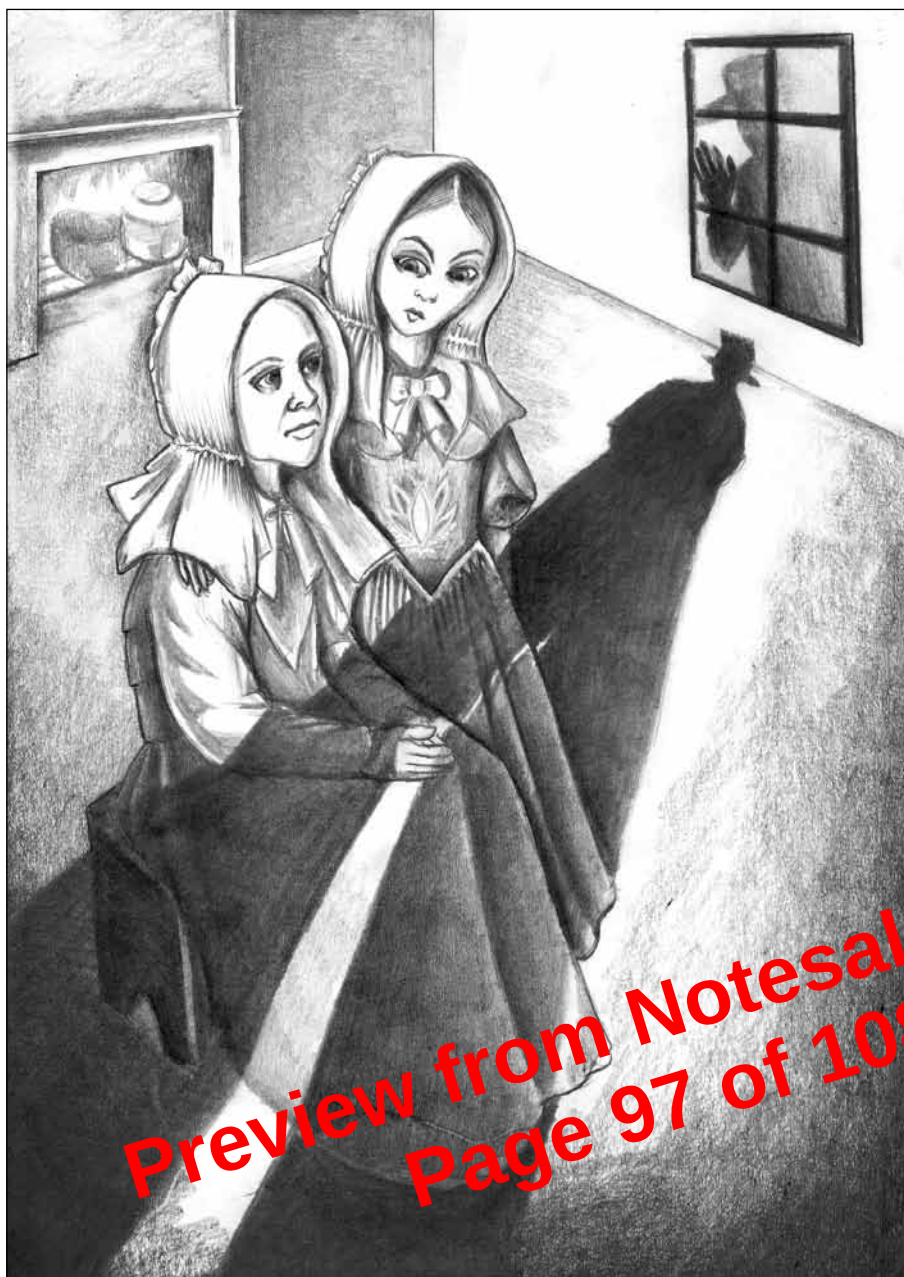
- **Tone:** In Walter Mitty's fantasy life the tone is **excited** and **optimistic**, **serious**, **confident** and **proud**. In his real life the tone is **irritable** and **scolding**. The anti-climax at the end creates a **sad** tone.
- **Mood:** How does this story make you feel? Happy, sad, angry or indifferent? Give reasons for your answer.

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words to know**Definitions of words from the short story:**

rakishly	jauntily, smartly
hydroplane	a plane that can land on water
grossly	hugely
overshoes	shoes worn over ordinary shoes to protect them from the snow
aimlessly	without direction
distraught	worried, upset
haggard	tired
glistening	shining
vaulted	sprang
insinuatingly	suggestively
bickering	arguing
pandemonium	chaos
lobby	entrance room
“auprès de ma blonde”	a French song
erect	upright
disdainful	scornful
inscrutable	impossible to understand

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The story ends the night after the burial, with Burgert de Jager blaming himself for the deaths because of his demands for water. Sukey, however, tells him she will not judge him.

2. Title

The title of the story indicates that the focus is on the two sisters, Marta and Sukey, who are devoted to each other.

3. Themes

The themes in the story are **land, patriarchy, tradition, devotion, obedience, submission, female self-sacrifice, compassion, bitterness, the meaning of sin and the right to judge.**

vocab

Patriarchy: A society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

Marta is very loving, gentle, unselfish and accepting. She shows this by agreeing to do as her father asks in order to help him save the farm. She tells Sukey:

“if I do right, right will come of it, and it is right for me to save the lands of my father.

Marta is willing to accept her fate. She does not even blame Redlinghuis for demanding that she marry him:

“There is not one of us that is without sin in the world and old Jan Redlinghuis is not always mad. Who am I to judge Jan Redlinghuis?”

Sukey is also prepared to sacrifice herself to save her gentle and passive sister, when she tries to persuade Redlinghuis to take her instead of Marta, but she is much tougher and more judgemental. She believes her father has done wrong in sacrificing both his wife and his daughter, and she tells him that he is at fault. She says to her father:

“It is blood that we lead on our lands to water them. Did not my mother die for it? And was it not for this that we sold my sister Marta to old Jan Redlinghuis?”

Sukey is also very judgemental of Redlinghuis, based on what people say about him. She says to him:

“it is said that you are a sinful man, Jan Redlinghuis, going at times a little mad in your head”

Sukey loses her faith in God as she cannot believe that God would allow the marriage of Marta and Redlinghuis. She tells her father:

“There is no God or surely He would have saved our Marta.”

Burgert de Jager's obsession with getting water for his farm leads to the death of his wife and his daughter Marta. It also causes the break in the relationship between himself and his daughter Sukey.

Burgert de Jager and Jan Redlinghuis are mostly seen through the eyes of Sukey. They are both seen as obsessive and greedy. However, near the end of the story they both seem to realise they have been wrong and feel sorry about it. Burgert de Jager says to Sukey:

“It is true what you said to me, Sukey. It is blood that I have led on my lands to water them, and this night will I close the furrow that I built from the Ghamka river. God forgive me, I will do it.”

Jan Redlinghuis becomes remorseful when Marta is at the point of death. He says to Sukey before he goes into the mountains and takes his own life:

“Which of us now had the greatest sin – your father who sold me his daughter Marta, or I who bought her? Marta who let herself be sold, or you who offered yourself to save her?”

By saying this, he points to the fact that no one should judge, as everyone has played some part in the tragic events.

Note how much of the dialogue sounds biblical. It establishes their identity as characters belonging to a religious community.



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summary

The Sisters

by Pauline Smith

1. Title

- Focuses on the two sisters, Marta and Sukey

2. Themes

- **Land, patriarchy** and **tradition**
- **Devotion, obedience** and **submission**
- **Female self-sacrifice**
- **Compassion** and **bitterness**
- The **meaning of sin**
- The **right to judge**

3. How is the story told?**3.1 Setting**

- The Little (Klein) Karoo

3.2 Structure and plot development

- **Complication:** The legal cases brought by Burgert de Jager against Jan Redlinghuis
- **Conflict:** Between Burgert de Jager and Jan Redlinghuis because of the water issue and then the money owed due to the expensive legal cases
- **Rising tension:** Grows when De Jager decides that his daughter Marta must marry Redlinghuis
- **Climax:** Marta becomes weaker and weaker because of her humiliation, and then dies
- **Resolution:** Sukey comes to understand the goodness of Marta and finds compassion for her father

3.3 Characterisation

- **Protagonists:** Marta, Sukey and Burgert de Jager are the main characters
- **Antagonist:** Jan Redlinghuis opposes their actions

3.4 Style

- **Dialogue:** Uses the sentence structure of Afrikaans to give a better impression of the speakers' context and culture
- **Description:** Of events, not the land or the people

3.5 Narrator and point of view

- **First person** narrator (Sukey de Jager)

3.6 Diction and figurative language

- "With each new water-case came more bitterness and sorrow to us all. Even between my parents at last came bitterness and sorrow. And in bitterness and sorrow my mother died."

Repetition

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